

## The folly of youth

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I had just graduated high school and signed the enlistment papers to join the Air Force.

That particular evening, the boredom of staying at home got to me. So, I grabbed my keys and got ready to go out. My mom, watching me get ready to leave said, "Maybe you should just stay home tonight," in her ever worrisome mother's voice. I dismissed her advice because I was anxious to leave. It was one of those dark and gloomy nights where you couldn't see due to the pitch-black sky.

In the confines of my car, I felt at ease and protected from the elements outside as I headed to the local movie theater to catch the latest offering. As I parked my car and walked to the theater entrance, I noticed a large crowd waiting outside in the rain to enter. I didn't want to get drenched in the rain waiting to get in so, I weighed my options go home or go somewhere else. I decided to take a quick trip to the local arcade. So quick, I must have thought that I didn't need to wear my seatbelt. A few miles down the road and I would be there.

I came to a long sweeping right turn. Suddenly, I realized I was able to turn the wheel, but the car kept going straight. I had no control over the car and was heading straight toward a large oak tree – the only tree around. All I remember at that point was a loud crashing sound. A moment later, I pulled my torso back in from the passenger's side window, which I had broken as I hit the tree and my body flew around the car. If not for my shoulder hitting the door, I would have been thrown clear. My attention quickly peaked when I saw the flames coming from under the hood of the car. I turned quickly and tried to open my door. No luck. Filled with panic, I kicked the door with both legs and forced it opened. Jumping out of the car I felt a moment of relief.

After spending a night in the hospital and more than 100 stitches in my head, the doctor let me go home. Was I lucky? You bet!

What had let me down? My car, my pride and joy, my wheels?

No. It was me, I let myself down. I chose to go out that night despite
the warnings of my mother, my conscience, and Mother Nature herself. I chose to drive my normal speed, which was still 10 mph faster
than allowed. I learned the inherent value of a seatbelt. If only I wore
my seatbelt, I wouldn't have almost lost my ear, had numerous stitches, or possibly have lost my opportunity to join the Air Force. I didn't
realize how much I had riding on some simple decisions that night
until I almost lost my life. Lucky me!



